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ALICE AND I
AT
LARCHMONT

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ALICE AND I
AT
LARCHMONT





ALICE AND I
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LARCHMONT

BY
GHERARDI DAVIS

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TO MY WIFE

RACING and sailing are about as different operations as can well be imagined on the water, and sailing a boat without another near by for comparison, gives the man at the tiller but a very faint notion of what his boat can do. How often have we, who love sailing and racing, wished for some one to turn up with whom we might have a friendly scrap! And how often, in spite of our knowledge to the contrary, have we not allowed ourselves some bright morning, with a nice breeze, to be deluded by the thought that our boat was doing splendidly, when by herself she was slipping through the water at what appeared to be wonderful speed! And then, in the afternoon, when our class started, we found in a very, very short time, that, to windward, we were far from being the equal of our com-

petitors—and we came in anywhere but first.

During the first two years of sailing *Alice Q*, Chubb and Barstow and I had many a scratch race Sunday afternoons. It was great fun, too. We would sometimes plan such a race ahead, sometimes we would just happen to see each other on the water, and then we would come together as fast as we could and sail a couple of courses as keenly as we did in the races on Saturday. For two years past, alas! we have had no such sport, *Spider* and *Soya* having both gone from the Lower Bay. Chubb now has *Queen Mab*—a beautiful little schooner,—and he has already added to his laurels by winning the Astor Cup in 1915. He handles her like his old *Q* at the starts: I saw him last year at Larchmont with his bowsprit over the line as the signal for his class was given; just as Barstow, in the race on Labor Day this year, had *Alice's* forestay at the line, as the gun fired. Barstow sailed *Alice* for me in this race, and won (I was too sore with rheumatism to sail), and it was the only time any one but myself ever took *Alice*

ALICE AND I AT LARCHMONT

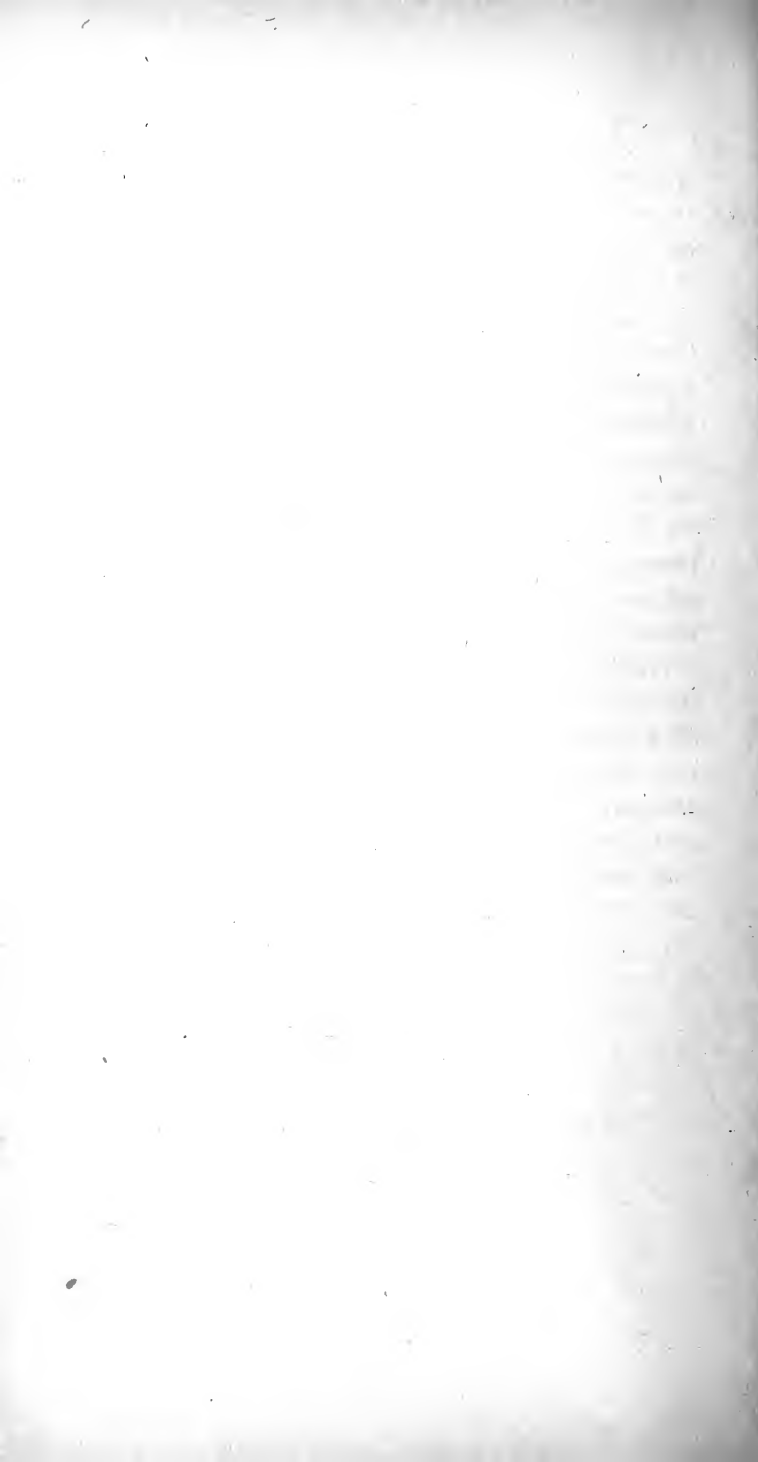
over the line in a race, and the only time she ever sailed a race without my being on board.

The Q class, I told you in "Alice Q and her Rivals," was going to pieces on Gravesend Bay in 1913; last year we were four; this year we were but two, *Virginia* and *Alice*, and next year who knows whether there will be any Q's! As my wife has long wished for a New York 30, I have bought de Forest's, which bore the quaint name of *Nepsi*. He wishes to keep the name, and I have re-named her *Alice*.

And as we have now said farewell to the Q's, I will spin a yarn or two to fill out the chapter of that famous and beautiful class, in which we had so much pleasure and such unexpected honors, and among the owners of which we made such warm friends.

GHERARDI DAVIS.

Christmas, 1915



LARCHMONT
RACE
WEEK



THE LADY AFTER WHOM
"ALICE" WAS NAMED

LARCHMONT
RACE WEEK

LARCHMONT Race Week brings together the most wonderful fleet of yachts imaginable, and this fleet is the most beautiful sight I have ever witnessed on the water. There are yachts of all sizes, rigs, designs, and colors. There are schooners, yawls, sloops, cutters, cat-boats, Butterflies, Stars, Jewels, dories and sailing navy-cutters. They are white, black, blue, mahogany, even yellow and green and red in color and, as we are told, the fleet has at times numbered nearly two hundred craft. The beauty of such a fleet on a bright, clear summer day no writer can adequately describe and no artist depict on canvas.

The first time we went to Larchmont the famous sloops *Aurora*, *Istalena* and *Winsome* were there (they are no longer in commission, and one is now a schooner),

and no large sloops in a class ever presented more wonderful pictures. We small fry would work out of the harbor and get up near the line to watch the larger yachts start, and these three would come to the line, after all the jockeying their able skippers could think of, and cross, usually as close together as we Q's did. To see one of them come for the line a trifle free, and finding she was too early, luff, and shiver her headsails to try and slow down enough not to be ahead of time; and then to watch another, whose skipper had not timed it quite so finely, get to the line with splendid headway and start on the gun, just before the first one had fully got under way again; used to get us in such a state of excitement that we would run all manner of risks of fouls to see them. I remember on one occasion getting very close to *Miladi*, as she, with rather ponderous dignity, was about to tack, and being received by her sailing master with a volley of weird fo'c'sle language. I asked Scott that evening if I had got in his way, but he replied, "My dear Sir, I wondered what on earth was the matter: I couldn't

ALICE AND I AT LARCHMONT

for the life of me see that you were in our way." This was before the days of Boucher's inviolable and awe-inspiring "Restricted Area."

As we Q's started a good half hour or more after the first large yachts, we had many an opportunity of watching their starts. The schooners, as a rule, did not interest me as much as the sloops, although I have often wondered how they escaped fouls in such close quarters. But when it came to the large sloops, and the New York 50's, the P's, in their best days (they are now apparently also gone), and the New York 30's, there was always something well worth seeing.

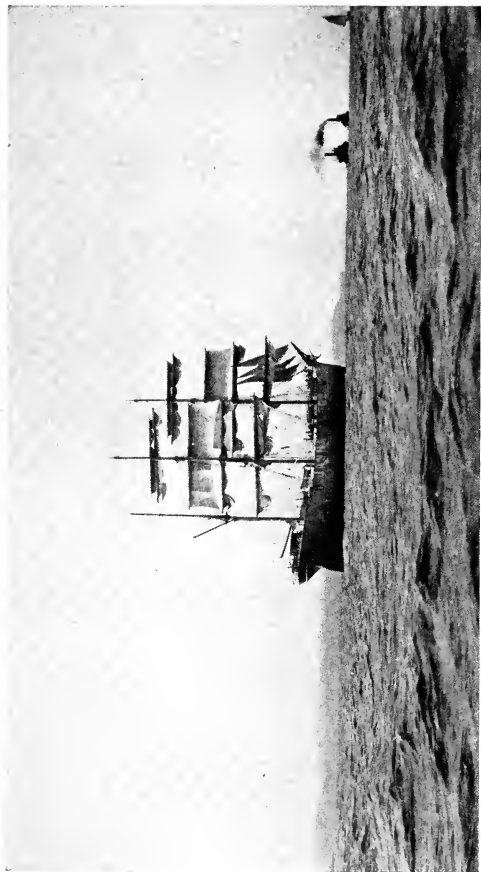
Crew B and Steere and Keegan could call off the names of the yachts as readily as they could recite their alphabets, and you would suppose they lived with Lloyd's Register in their pockets. I always admired their knowledge, for not only did they know a yacht by its present name, but they knew its old names and the names of its present and former owners—or pretended to do so.

When eight or ten of the 50's came to the line together, it was a sight to de-

light the heart of a sailor. They were handled like Q's, and went about or jibed as readily as we did. While I never admired their looks—their fore-triangle is too small—they are wonderful yachts to watch as a class. There was no fuss or noise on deck as they tacked; you heard the clank of the blocks and saw the flash of the metal parts in the sun, as the great white sails swung over, while the hulls slipped through the smooth water with barely a ripple. One day at Mott's Point, I went about with a 50 as we made the mark, and she carried me along with her for several hundred yards before I dropped off her wave. I can see the owner now look over the side at us and wave his cap to me. But we did not win as did the 50 which *Queen Mab* towed off Newport in the same manner.

A few years ago the little schooner-ettes, as they were called, made up a beautiful class to watch, but they too have vanished from the racing fleet.

The New York 30's were always a superb sight; for, like the 50's, they were kept in perfect condition and being, like



AN OBSTACLE TO RACING

ALICE AND I AT LARCHMONT

the large sloops, a one-design class, the uniformity of their appearance added greatly to the beauty of the sight. That class, too, has lost many of its old skippers—Nichols, Duell, de Forest, Roosevelt—but it keeps its good name and its old spirit.

When our turn to start came we, of course, had our hands full. For some reason I have not learned how to make a good start at Larchmont. Few were even fairly good, and as the start in a class as closely matched as are the Q's often means the race, I have been decidedly not successful on the Sound. I should have done much better than I did. Still, I had no end of pleasure, and the few races I did win were worth winning, most decidedly.

Racing on the Sound is an entirely different problem from racing on the Lower Bay. In the first place, the water is rarely rough, and, except with a hard Northeast or East wind, the waves have no great power. With us on the Lower Bay, the tides in the channels are so strong that even a light breeze against them quickly makes a hard sea. For this

ALICE AND I AT LARCHMONT

reason sailing and racing on the Sound are usually pleasanter and dryer work than with us. I must say, however, that the Sound tides I have encountered are not to be wholly despised, and an ebb tide at Matinicock Point is a very hard proposition to tackle in a light breeze.

Again, beautiful as is the water with us out towards the Southeast, especially when a fresh breeze makes the sea line a deep blue; and fine as are the Navesink Highlands and the hills of Staten Island; the views on the Sound are much more attractive than on the Lower Bay. Again, the water is so deep and the Sound so broad as to permit of wonderfully good courses being laid out, far better than we can have, because of the many shoal spots in the Bay. We have worked out some good courses of late, but we have not the free stretches of water they have on the Sound.

There is one thing, however, in which the Sound is far behind us, and that is, the wind. For one day of racing when we have a calm, they have a dozen. And then there are certain peculiarities that we sailors from the Lower Bay have

to learn about again and again. We are told, for example, that it is essential to keep close to the shore, from which the wind blows, and the closer the better. The first day of Larchmont Race Week this year I learned to my cost how literally true this is.

We had enjoyed the starts of the larger classes as usual, and as the first leg was a reach to Captain's Island, with the wind in the North or a trifle West of North, we Q's all kept along together very handsomely at first. But we soon noticed that the 30's and the others which started ahead of us, had slowed down, and that we were overhauling them fast, and soon we, too, were moving very slowly. Gradually we, the 30's, and some handicap yachts were trailing along in a group. *Alice* was well up with the others, but I had kept a trifle to leeward, as I did not wish to get into the luffing matches the others were in. We saw *Arvia* and *Dixie*, who were well to windward, luffing each other and being luffed by 30's and handicaps, and I was rather congratulating myself that I was not a hundred yards further North.

ALICE AND I AT LARCHMONT

And so, too, was a 30 which was near us. Then happened one of those extraordinary things that come on the Sound. The wind dropped entirely where we were, and all the group to windward of us, except *Virginia*, moved on towards the mark which was a mile or more away. Why *Virginia* stood still was a puzzle, but after a while she too moved on. And there was *Alice*, with two or three other craft, motionless except for the tide, which was negligible, and there we stayed for half an hour. The water was as smooth as glass, and the sun was as hot as it could be. We were helpless, and as if to increase our trouble and try our tempers, we every now and then could see a belated yacht well in-shore sail slowly past us. And when at last we got a breeze, which carried us to Captain's Island, we saw, as we rounded that mark to stand across the Sound to Oak Point, the entire fleet ahead of us miles away. We were 40 minutes or more behind them!

In 1912, at Larchmont, I witnessed a similar freak of wind. We had lain around the starting line literally for



CRAVEN SHOAL BUOYS



BENSONHURST MARK



hours, and had barely got strung out on the Sound on the way to Week's Point (it was almost calm and fearfully hot), when there came a fair breeze from the East. You could see a deep blue line on the water coming towards us, and very soon the sound made by the moving of the fifty or more yachts about us could be heard. It was like a metallic tinkle at first, followed by a much louder noise, as the boats to windward began to move faster and faster. It was a wonderful sight. The towering sails of *Medora* filled first, and she started on her course, and gradually all of us got under way. But here I noticed a phenomenon I had never witnessed before. A couple of hundred feet to leeward of *Alice* was *More Joy*, and with her twenty or thirty other yachts, absolutely becalmed. Not a breath of wind reached their sails from this Easterly breeze. The wind travelled to a certain point and then just vanished, and it was a very long time before *More Joy* got under way at all.

This phenomenon in 1912 was far more remarkable than our experience

at Captain's Island this year, although this last was heart-breaking, and proved, positively, that the rule about sailing close in-shore must be followed literally. The rest of the 1915 race is worth relating, for it was quite as extraordinary. We and the nearest 30 jogged along across the Sound together to Oak Point, and as we got there we began to get a breeze from the West. The others of our class, *Arvia* (sailed by Commodore Bacon), *Dixie* and *Virginia*, were already a long way towards the North side of the Sound again, on their way home, with the old wind. Griffin, who was with me, kept urging me to follow the rule literally, and we did. We tacked in and out of the little bays, going in as close to the beach as we dared, and so, with a freshening wind, we, and several others, worked towards Matinick Point.

While this was going on a great change had come over the sky. In the East, it was dark and lowering, in the Northwest it was black and to the Southwest huge thunderheads had arisen. We saw that a squall from the Northwest was sure to sweep across the Sound, but we did not

care: we wanted wind, and plenty of it. Steere was on board and I believe kept appealing to his friend Boreas. The squall, however, got across the Sound well ahead of us, and then to the South there made up the worst looking cloud imaginable. It was so dark that the water had a pale green tinge, and the trees on shore were almost emerald in color. The red brick houses stood out most vividly and things in the sky looked as if almost anything might break loose. The wind was quite fresh as we made Matinick Point buoys and had hauled just enough for us to lay our course for home close-hauled. To the South the lightning flashed vividly, and the thunder roared tremendously now and then, but as the wind from a new squall came harder and harder we were perfectly happy. We made things snug and started across the Sound, going at a magnificent speed, with our rail under. We were just on the edge of the squall, apparently, and held the wind fair until nearly across the Sound. Then it dropped fast, but it had unfortunately reached the other three Q's. They, after

being almost becalmed, were now also travelling pretty fast, and we were finally beaten by only a few minutes by the leading Q, *Arvia*. So fickle was the wind at the end that we had to make repeated tacks to fetch the line, on one of which we sailed nearly to the line on the wrong side! The wind kept heading us, as it usually does there at the stake boat.

I do not mean to say that we never had any breezes on the Sound, for especially this year we had very fair winds. And when we get a steady, fair breeze on the Sound the water as a rule is smooth, and *Alice* travels like a bird, especially on a close reach: that is her strongest point of sailing. On two days this year we had a perfect windward leg to Captain's Island, on one of which I was beaten, while on the other (the last day of Race Week) I just nipped *Virginia* on the last tack at the buoy. That was the only day *Alice* was first. *Virginia* won the series and deserved it. This year *Alice*, *Arvia* and *Virginia* each got firsts. Last year, *Little Rhody* got five out of six firsts easily; *Alice* won but one first, and that was on a day



AMBROSE CHANNEL
BUOY 18



FORT HAMILTON MARK

when we had a good breeze and a squall.

If the start at Larchmont is beautiful, so, too, in its way, is the finish, especially when the last leg is across from Hempstead Harbor. The various yachts are, of course, scattered all over the last leg. Here and there two or three in a class are fighting it out to the finish, but, as a rule, there is a steady stream of yachts of all kinds, from dories, Stars and the other local one-design classes, up to the 50's and the schooners. They approach the finish line in groups or singly, a 30 and a yawl just ahead of a 50, and abeam of the 50, a schooner and a Star, each as insistent on her rights at that point of the race as if she were only with her own class. I must say that as a rule the larger yachts are very considerate of the smaller ones. How the Regatta Committees ever get the times is a puzzle to us sailors, but somehow they do it.

From the finish, to our moorings, was sometimes a long sail, and again, with a fresh breeze, making our moorings, yes, and sometimes leaving them, was not

ALICE AND I AT LARCHMONT

at all a simple matter. For many a yacht was doing the same thing at the same time, all were in a hurry, and there is not a vast amount of room in the pretty little Larchmont anchorage.

I do not know that all this gives you any idea of Larchmont Race Week. I cannot describe all the fun of meeting at the Club before and after the races. We would meet on the Club verandah before the races and discuss the wind and weather. Judge Clarke, of *Audax*, would be there and Butler Duncan, Clark of *Irolita*, the two Vanderbilts, Chubb, sometimes Dallas Pratt and Whiton. Then there were de Forest and Duell and Monks, Scott of *Miladi* and Ford of *Katrina*, Gartland of *Robin Hood* (to the nth power), Swan, Fish of *Oriole*, Corry, the King of the Stars, Luckenbach and many another good yachtsman. Then came the crowding into the launch to get to our various boats, and after the race there was the impatient tooting of horns for the launch as everybody wanted to hurry ashore.

ALICE AND I AT LARCHMONT

I have not the power to describe the beauty of sky and water and shore : I should have to be a far better writer than I can ever pretend to be, to do justice to the beauty of a summer day at Larchmont. Nor can I give any idea of the exquisite effects of light as the sun goes down, when the water turns a deep blue, with purple shadows, and the sails are golden against the water and the pink sky over Long Island. Larchmont Harbor and the Sound beyond, from the Club House are at that time lovelier than words can tell. You who may read this, if you have ever seen Larchmont under these conditions, know how beautiful it all is.

If things have changed on the Lower Bay, so, too, have they changed on the Sound, and several familiar faces were missing this year. Some, like Noble, Sr., Duell and Coudert have given up racing for the present ; some, like Duncan, Vanderbilt and Nichols, were on the Cup Defenders, and we saw them but once in Race Week ; others, like Harry Johnson, had joined the great majority. Then

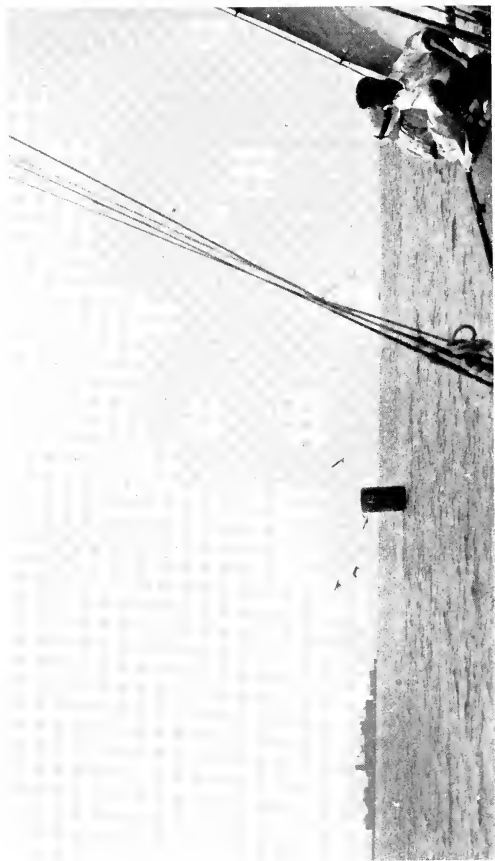
on the water, the big sloops had disappeared. The schoonerettes, as I have said, were absent, and so, too, the Stamford schooners, most of the P's and many a well-known S. But the true spirit of yachting was there, as always.

One change was particularly pleasant to me. The Commodore of the Larchmont Yacht Club was my old friend James B. Ford, and it seemed odd to meet him as I did, and talk of yachts and yacht club management, instead of District politics, on which we have both worked so hard in days past. He is a true deep-sea sailor and a real Commodore.

Still, even this year there were many old friends on the Club verandah, just as we saw many a familiar yacht on the water, but there was also many a new sailor; and all came there for the love of the best of sports, yachting. And again and again I have been glad that I took it up, even if I was forty years late in learning to sail.

ON
GRAVESEND
BAY





APPROACHING CAN BUOY 13

ON GRAVESEND
BAY

ANOTHER summer on the Lower Bay has gone by and with it another season of racing and sailing. Except that nothing has made up for the loss of my old sailing friends, Noble, Chubb, Barstow and Stewart, and their Q's, *Greyjacket*, *Spider*, *Soya* and *Princess*, it has been one of the best of summers. For I have sailed oftener in *Alice* and had more pleasure in her than ever before. It so happened that at the end of the season there was the most superb sailing weather, and over and over again only the coming on of darkness made my wife and me come ashore. And what glorious sunsets we had at the end!

Every time I go sailing I am on the lookout for something interesting. While again this year the wonderful fleet of

ocean steamers was not to be seen, all summer Gravesend Bay was full of vessels loading with war supplies. They anchored up towards Fort Hamilton, and interfered not a little with our races. It was a curious sight to see a big steamer surrounded by half a dozen barges from which case after case of ammunition was hoisted on board. Among the vessels so loading was a magnificent Russian four-masted bark, the *Lynton*, and we often sailed over to look at her: for she had a captain who kept his yards squared in a way that would have delighted an officer of our old navy. Then, of course, there were many visiting yachts, but none more beautiful than *Katoura* and *Windward*.

It was a cloudy and rainy summer, and the sky was frequently overcast. This often produced brilliant halos, and on two occasions we saw around the sun a perfect circular rainbow, the colors of which were very vivid. I had never seen such a phenomenon before.

Of course we had our usual tussles with the tides at Buoys 18 and 13 and at Craven Shoals. On one day in Race

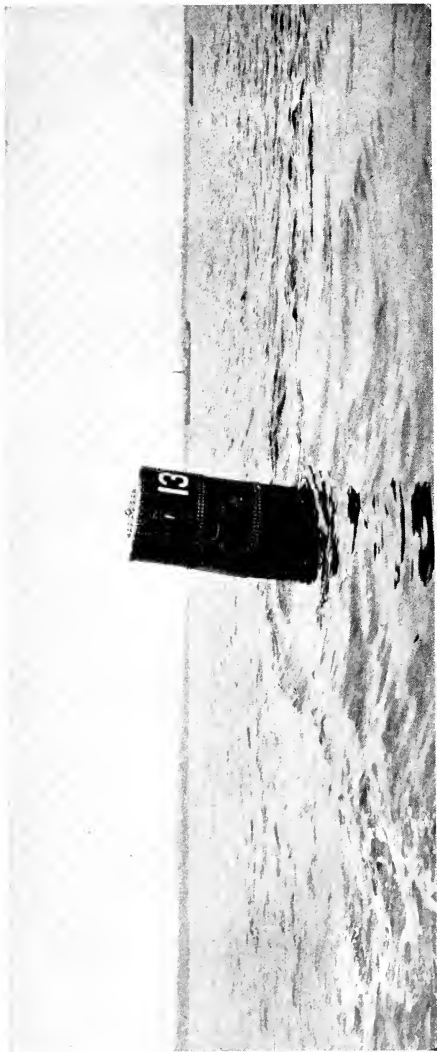
Week at Can Buoy 12, after we passed that buoy, we tacked to go to Buoy 13 up the channel, and worked out to windward theoretically, but as a matter of fact we did not get very far and we kept Buoy 12 abeam of us for at least half an hour. The wake of the buoy, caused by the tide, was a good hundred yards long. When we got to 13, the tide was almost as bad. In fact, all summer the tides appeared to be unusually strong.

We had many a sail on pleasant afternoons. Judge Weeks, Dr. Atkinson, Eliot Tuckerman and his wife, Barstow and Mrs. Barstow, my old skipper Henry Eagle and his wife, Cump Sherman and others, came along sometimes, while I took young Finlay with me repeatedly and made him learn how to handle a Q. He is wedded to the Star class, and Stars, to judge from the praises sung of them at our Captains' dinner, are the greatest boats ever built. I wonder how yachting ever got along without them.

Then I raced, of course, with Crew B, whose duties on the Seawanhaka Regatta Committee kept him away from Sea Gate far too often, but who is just as

enthusiastic over yachts and the ladies as ever; Steere, who is even more of an old salt than he was; Struthers, who is following the example of his old skipper, Noble, and is to be married; Keegan, a rattling good sailor, who, I wish, was more often at Sea Gate; and then Stebbins, who never forgets the sails but can spot a pretty girl in another boat a mile away, without glasses at that. Then there was Griffin, who tended sheet on four of the Larchmont races, and thinks almost as much of *Alice* and Aleck as I do; and Bullock, and once Henry Eagle on a race we won by the veriest fluke. I know they recall the days we spent together with no end of pleasure and I hope we shall have many more of the same kind. George Church and Floyd Noble, I regret to say, could not sail with me even once this last summer.

Virginia having been laid up after Larchmont Race Week, as the result of a slight injury, I sailed twice as crew with Bullock on his S, *Loafer*, and I renewed my old acquaintance with cleats. In the first race, Steere and I were crew. It was a stifling hot afternoon, with very



THE TIDE AT CAN BUOY 13

little breeze, but the crew did a lot of talking and kept advising the captain how to sail his boat. Bullock, as always, took it most good-naturedly, but he squared accounts with me, at least, between the Fort Hamilton and the Bensonhurst marks, by making me sit on the boom to keep the mainsail out. What wind there was was with us: the sun was dead aft: and to say that I got hot but mildly expresses my condition. However, it was a crew's duty to do what he was ordered to do, and I sat there for an hour I should say, for we moved along very slowly, and chaffed Steere who was attending to the spinnaker, and now and then ventured a remark to Bullock. But oh! how it reminded me of old days! We came in second and on time allowance remained second (*Loafer* was in the handicap class), and Steere and I promptly claimed all credit for the race.

The next week Robinson and I were crew, and Crew B chuckled when I got my shins jammed by the tiller. "Now G," he said, "you know how it feels yourself," he having had many a black

and blue mark from the tiller of *Alice Q*. This race was livelier than the last, as we had a fine breeze, and a sea in the channel. I lay out to windward (and, I confess, found the space allotted to me rather cramped) and got very wet. I also had the next day a fine black and blue mark along my ribs from lying up against a cleat. Again the crew gave advice, but this time we were squelched by the captain very soon after we started on the first windward leg. We handled the light sails, I thought, superbly; in fact, I quite flattered myself on my work as crew on an S.

The Atlantic Yacht Club Race Week again was favored with superb weather. We had a larger fleet than last year, but in it there were only two *Q*'s; *Dixie* has gone to the Sound for good. We had, however, a very handsome fleet of handicap boats from the Gravesend Bay Yacht Club and quite a large fleet of Stars. At Larchmont the Stars (there were upwards of twenty, I should say) looked like a flock of white birds, and they were a very lovely sight. Steere and Struthers sailed with me the first

race, and Steere and Keegan on the two others: and we won all three. This gave us the beautiful Thompson Cup for the third time and it so became my own. And then, with Steere and Barstow as my crew, I again won the Childs Trophy. Last year I also won it and the Gravesend Bay championship as well. Surely good fortune came tumbling into *Alice's* cockpit with a vengeance during the past three years. Never were amateurs more pleased than we in *Alice* over our successes, and as for Aleck, he had a perpetual smile on his face, even when I growled at him for talking too much in one race. He has become a philosopher, and no longer sighs over our defeats.

I do not know who will race *Alice Q* next year, for she most likely will belong to some one else. But whoever he may be, I trust that he will look upon her, and treat her as a live thing, as I have done. She is a restless creature at her mooring, and capricious under sail. You cannot forget her for an instant when on the wind, and you have got to sail her quite differently from the *Q's*, her rivals.

ALICE AND I AT LARCHMONT

One of the joys of racing lies in matching your wits against the other fellows' wits and I have met some pretty sharp wits on the rival Q's. *Alice* is a beautiful little ship to look at and she has certainly won a name for herself; and for winning her laurels she and I owe a great deal more than we can tell to our crews and to Aleck.

My S was numbered "S 16." As I could not get "Q 16" I took "Q 61."

Alice Q's general dimensions are:

Length over all..... 43' 6"

Water line..... 27'

Beam..... 8' 6"

The peak of the mainsail is about 45 feet above the water.

In the five years that I have owned *Alice Q*, she has sailed in 117 races, and has won 33 races.

Handwritten signature or mark at the top right corner.



Handwritten signature or mark at the bottom right corner.

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